

The Meaning of Faith

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INTRODUCTION

A. Story of troubled old grandmother

An old woman had, for years, been thoroughly overcome by all kinds of troubles and trials in life. Her family had done all they could for her, but nothing seemed to help. Finally, they gathered together one day and told her. "Grandma, we've done all we can for you. From now on you just have to have faith in God." A look of fear and total dejection came over her face as she said, "Oh, dear. Has it come to that?" --- I want to proclaim this morning, that it always comes down to that!

B. Our world seems to not know what to do with God.

1. Should you believe in God or not?
2. Should you cover your bases and believe in God and in whatever seems to work?
3. If you believe in God, can you somehow cover it up so people won't think you're some kind of a fanatic?

C. Even in the religious world there is some confusion about what constitutes a faithful person.

D. So, this morning, I want us to look at some fundamental truths concerning faith.

1. What is faith?
2. Who is a faithful person?
3. Is my faith pleasing to God?

I. WHY IS THE SUBJECT OF FAITH IMPORTANT?

A. Because it is the foundation of being a true Christian.

1. Jesus, on the Sermon on the Mount, spoke of the importance of building on the right foundation. We are not to build on the shifting sand but upon solid rock.
 - a. That foundation is our faith which is centered upon Jesus Christ.

B. Heb 11:6

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.”

1. What this verse tells us.
 - a. Without faith, we cannot please God.
 - b. With faith, we can please God.
 - c. If we have the right kind of faith we will diligently seek God.
2. Therefore, if we are at all concerned about pleasing God, faith is a very important subject.

C. Rom 1:16-17

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God from faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith.” (ASV)

1. Plainly states, “the righteous shall live by faith.”
 - a. To be right with God we must have faith.
2. The righteous do not live by their own righteousness.
3. Paul made it very clear that faith relates to the gospel of Jesus and that faith and the gospel go together to produce salvation.

D. Rom 3:20, 28

“Because by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for through the law comes the knowledge of sin. We conclude, therefore, that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.” (ASV)

1. We know sin because of law. For where there is law there is knowledge of sin.
 - a. Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”
2. No one is justified by works of merit or of law keeping because no one can keep law perfectly.
3. Therefore, justification before God comes by faith and faith comes by hearing the word of God. (Rom.10:17)

II. THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT OF FAITH

A. Why we need a biblical concept of faith

1. Because the most popular concept of faith is one that defines the term by an unbiblical definition.
2. Most people think that faith simply means to believe, to give mental assent to something
 - a. this is the basic denominational concept
 - b. it is at the root of the belief-only doctrine of salvation
3. God address’s this false doctrine of faith-only in the book of James.
 - a. James 2:19-24
“Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the demons also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.”
 1. We see that the demons believe or have faith in God, does that mean they are going to be saved? Certainly not!
 2. Why not? Because, (and this is the key) they do not **OBEY** the commands of God!
 3. Belief or faith alone does not save.
4. Jesus said in:
 - a. Matthew 7:21
“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth** the will of my Father which is in heaven.”
 - b. John 14:15

“If ye love me, **keep** my commandments.”

5. We see then that faith is more than just saying that you believe in Jesus and you accept Him into your heart.

B. Faith defined

1. Hebrews 11:1
“Now faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence (conviction) of things not seen.”
2. W.E. Vine has this to say concerning faith (PISTIS) as the Bible speaks of faith.
 - a. primarily, a “firm persuasion”, a conviction based upon hearing, is used in the NT always of “faith in God or Christ, or things spiritual.”
 - b. The main elements in “faith” in its relation to the invisible God, as distinct from “faith” in man, are especially brought out in the use of this noun and the corresponding verb, *pisteuo*; they are:
 1. a firm conviction, producing a full acknowledgement of God’s revelation or truth.
 2. a personal surrender to God.
 3. a conduct inspired by such surrender.
 - c. Faith = firm conviction with full acknowledgement of God’s complete truth, which brings about a conduct or obedience to the commands of God because of our personal surrender to Him.
3. So we see that faith is composed of **two** vital elements
 - a. a belief that God exists
 - b. the action of seeking after him
 - c. one element or the other may be the emphasis in different verses, but the two never contradict one another

C. The following passages illustrate that Bible writers understood that faith is composed of both **belief** and **action**

1. Salvation passages
 - a. Rom 1:16
“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (NKJ)
 1. The gospel is God’s power for salvation to everyone who **believes**.
 - b. II Thess. 1:8
“...in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not **obey** the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (NKJ)
 - c. Notice what is stated in these two verses:
 1. Rom. 1:16 = those who **believe** the gospel will obtain salvation
 2. II Thess. 1:8 = those who **do not obey** the gospel will not obtain salvation
 - d. II Thess. is a negative statement. We can change it to a positive statement and not change it’s meaning and we can compare the two verses this way.
 1. Rom. 1:16 = those who **believe** the gospel will obtain salvation
 2. II Thess 1:8 = those who **obey** the gospel will obtain salvation
 3. Therefore, believe = obey
2. The Hebrews writer say’s it this way
 - a. Heb 3:18-19
“And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were **disobedient**? And we see that they were not able to enter in because of **unbelief**.”

(ASV)

- b. KJV uses "believed not" in verse 18, but is better translated as disobedient because two different Greek words are used in verses 18 and 19.
 - c. verse 18 = those who didn't enter his rest are the disobedient
 - d. verse 19 = the conclusion he draws is that they were disobedient because they did not believe.
 - e. Therefore, you could conclude that if they did believe they would have been obedient.
3. James' explanation of faith clearly states this idea
- a. James 2:17
"Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."
 - b. James 2:26
"For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."
 - c. He isn't suggesting that we add works of merit to our faith but rather that only a faith that works or is obedient, is alive.

D. As we can see faith demands works of obedience and that faith itself is a work.

1. Faith itself is a work.
 - a. I Thess. 1:3
"Remembering without ceasing your **work of faith**, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father."
 - b. II Thess. 1:11
"Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the **work of faith** with power."
2. Work of faith = Obedience of faith
 - a. Rom. 1:5
"By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for **obedience to the faith** among all nations, for his name."
 - b. Rom. 16:26
"But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the **obedience of faith**."

E. Biblical faith is a combination of two elements:

1. A firm belief, a trust, a conviction and assurance of God and His Son, Jesus Christ.
2. The consequent action (obedience) which logically follows from what we believe.

CONCLUSION

A. Faith is essential

1. We must have faith to be pleasing to God.
2. We must have faith to be saved.
3. We must have faith to be justified.
4. Without faith there is no relationship with God.
5. Biblical faith results in obedience to the commands of God

- B.** Through the grace of God, He has offered salvation to all those who believe. As we have learned that belief causes us to do what God has commanded in order to obtain salvation. What is it that God commands?

1. We must believe.
2. We must repent.
3. We must confess.
4. We must be baptized for the remission of sins.
5. We must live faithfully till we die.

C. What kind of faith do you have today? Is it a faith that is pleasing to God?

1. If so, then keep that faith
2. If not, we pray that you will obtain the faith that will be pleasing to God.